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ABSTRACT

The effect of gender on retirement attitudes among college faculty and other university professionals were studied, and variables that might affect attitudes toward retirement were investigated. A 35-item questionnaire was mailed to all faculty and nonteaching professionals at a university center, a four-year college, and a community college of the State University of New York. Of the 2,058 questionnaires, 958 were returned. Attitudes toward one's own retirement were found to be gender-related: "looking forward to retirement with pleasure" was the modal response for men, while "looking forward to retirement with mixed feelings" was the modal response for women. The responses of single persons were equally divided between "with pleasure" and "mixed feelings" for both men and women. Separated, widowed, or divorced men and women, on the other hand, tended to anticipate retirement with "mixed feelings." It was primarily among the married university professionals that men and women differed in attitudes toward retirement, with married men holding the more favorable attitude and married women expressing greater ambivalence. When respondents assessed their attitudes toward retirement in general, women tended to have less positive attitudes than did men. The variables of respondent age, job status, marital status, educational level, and job satisfaction yielded little conclusive information about the possible sources of women's more negative attitudes toward retirement. Some possible explanations are offered. (SW)

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DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD RETIREMENT AMONG MALE AND FEMALE FACULTY AND OTHER UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONALS

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INSTITUTE OF GERONTOLOGY

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Differences in Attitudes Toward Retirement

Among Male and Female Faculty and Other University Professionals

Until recently, most of the literature concerned with attitudes toward and adjustment to retirement has focused on men. (Friedman and Havighurst, 1954; Glamser, 1976; Streib, 1971). However, as the proportion of women in the work force continues to expand, and as the women's movement has its impact on society, it seems likely that both work roles and the retirement experience will have increased significance for women, and should be examined. This study aims to continue the work begun by Jacobsen (1977), Fox (1977), Atchley (1976) and Jaslow (1976) by exploring differences first,in attitudes toward retirement and secondly, in the factors which tend to affect those attitudes among male and female faculty and other university professionals such as librarians, administrators and counseling staff.

A study which focuses on university women is significant not only because this group has not been extensively studied in the past, but also because most of these women work by choice, rather than from necessity. Therefore, it might be expected that both the work role orientation of these women and the attitudes they hold toward retirement will differ from those of the non-university women previously studied.

Based on the literature, we proposed the schema outlined in Figure 1. Although our basic focus was on the effect of gender on retirement attitudes, we were also concerned with identifying other variables which might affect attitudes toward retirement, particularly those which might show differences among the women sampled; e.g. faculty status, age, marital status, education and job satisfaction. In addition, we identified four variables which may be either affected by or reflective of attitudes toward retirement -- these are located at the right of the schema; however, analysis of their impact is beyond the scope of

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this paper.

According to previous studies, women tend to be less positively oriented toward retirement than men (Atchley, 1977; Coyle, 1976). It has been suggested that women's adjustment to retirement is not eased by their ability to replace the lost work role with the role of homemaker. This seems to be particularly true for professional women. This study, therefore, hypothesized that women would express more negative attitudes toward retirement than do men.

In addition to gender, it was hypothesized that faculty status would have a differential effect on attitudes toward retirement, based on the assumption that work roles differ for faculty and NTPs. However, the lack of previous research in this area prevented initial specification as to the direction these differences would take.

Age as a variable affecting attitudes toward retirement was also examined. Differences in attitudes between older and younger women may exist in light of the fact that younger women now entering the work force have been reared in an environment more accepting of full employment for women. Therefore, younger women may be more likely to regard their work role as a right, whereas older women may see it as a newly-won privilege which they are reluctant to give up (Atchley, 1977). There are also indications that young people tend to have more positive attitudes toward retirement, with feelings of ambivalence increasing as the actuality of retirement draws nearer (Atchley, 1977; Ekerdt, 1975). We expected, therefore, that younger women would have more positive attitudes than their older counterparts.

Another variable requiring further exploration is the relationship between marital status and attitudes toward retirement. There have been mixed findings regarding this

relationship (Jacobson, 1974; Schneider, 1964; Sussman, 1972). Based on Coyle's (1976) finding that women's less positive attitudes toward retirement are most strongly influenced by the loss of job-related social ties, it was hypothesized that married women, who have an established supportive relationship, would have a more positive attitude toward retirement than their nonmarried contemporaries.

With respect to the variable of education, it was hypothesized that women who had attained higher levels of education would have less positive attitudes toward retirement than less educated women in the sample. This was also based on the assumption that work roles and their concomitant rewards would differ according to educational status.

Previous studies do not support a direct negative relationship between job satisfaction and attitudes toward retirement (Glamser, 1976; Johnson and Strothers, 1962), although it has been suggested that women with lower work involvement were more satisfied with substituting a homemaker role following retirement (Sheldon, 1975). However, the relationship between these variables for women has not been fully explored, especially for professional women. The hypothesis proposed here is that those women with higher job satisfaction would have a more negative attitude toward retirement than those women who reported lower levels of job satisfaction.

Method

A 35 item questionnaire was mailed to all faculty and nonteaching professionals (NTPs) at three types of State University of New York campuses: a University Center, a 4-year college and a community college. Of the 2058 sent, 958 were returned, for an overall rate of return of 45.5%.

Sample

Of the 958 respondents, 74% were men and 26% were women. As Table I indicates, of the men, 72% were faculty and 28% were NTPs, while of the women, 66% held faculty positions and 34% were NTPs. Median age was similar for both genders (41.9 for men, 39.5 for women). Modal marital status differed for men and women: 86% of the men were married, while only 51% of the women fell in that category. Modal levels of education also evidenced gender differences -- 55% of the men had Ph.D.'s while 54% of the women had only a Masters degree. In addition, while we did not include job title as a variable in our investigation, it is interesting to note that the modal job title for male faculty was full Professor while for female faculty it was Assistant Professor.

Results

The data lend at least partial support for the schema proposed. Attitudes toward retirement were measured by two questions -- one concerned with respondent's attitudes about his or her own retirement, and one focused on attitudes about retirement in general.

Individual Attitudes Toward Retirement -- As shown in Table 2, attitudes toward one's own retirement are gender-related. "Looking forward to retirement with pleasure" is the modal response for men (43%) while "Looking forward to retirement with mixed feelings" is the modal response for women (40%), ($x^2 = 8.32$, 2 df, $p < .02$). There were no gender differences in the number responding "looking forward to retirement with fear or dread" or "haven't thought about it."

After having found this basic relationship between gender and retirement attitudes, we looked at each of the next set of variables in turn to see if any of them either accounted for or altered the gender differences.

The relationship between attitudes and gender was not affected by faculty status. Responses of male faculty paralleled those of male NTPs and responses of female faculty were similar to those of female NTPs (Table 2). Consequently, no further differentiation was made between faculty and NTP categories in the following analyses.

As shown in Table 3, age was significantly related to attitudes toward retirement and this age effect was the same for both men and women. The major age difference was between those who had and those who had not given any thought to retirement, with the number of those responding "haven't thought about it," not unexpectedly, declining as age increased. An attempt to control for this age effect was made by excluding those responding "haven't thought about it" from the remainder of the analysis. When this was done, the proportion of those responding "with pleasure," "with fear or dread," or "with mixed feelings" remained stable across age groups for both men and women, except for those between 41-50. Women in this age group responded more like their male counterparts, reporting "looking forward to retirement with pleasure."

Marital status had a different effect on attitudes for each gender, as illustrated in Table 4. The relationship between these two variables was statistically significant only for the men. "Looking forward to retirement with pleasure" was the modal response for men who were single (49%) or married (58%), but the men who were widowed, separated or divorced gave a modal response of looking forward to retirement with "mixed feelings" (64%), which was more like the women's responses. It is interesting to note that while the differences among the three categories of women were not statistically significant, single women responded more like single or married men, selecting "with pleasure" as their modal attitude toward retirement.

Viewed another way, among single, separated, widowed, or divorced persons, men and women evidence the same attitudes toward retirement. The responses of single persons are equally divided between "with pleasure" and "mixed feelings" for both the men and the women. Separated, widowed, or divorced men and women, on the other hand, tend to anticipate retirement with "mixed feelings." It is primarily among the married university professionals that men and women differ in attitudes toward retirement, with married men holding the more favorable attitude and married women expressing greater ambivalence.

Neither of the two remaining variables -- education or job satisfaction -- showed a significant relationship to retirement attitudes for either men or women (Tables 5 and 6). However, although the relationship is not statistically significant, it is interesting to note that, as we hypothesized, the number reporting "looking forward to retirement with mixed feelings" increases as education levels rise. In addition, there were no gender differences in attitudes for those holding BA degrees or for those reporting only a moderate level of job satisfaction. Women who either held BA degrees or who reported having only moderate levels of job satisfaction, responded more like their male counterparts than their female contemporaries. "Looking forward to retirement with pleasure" was the modal response for those women.

Attitudes Toward Retirement in General -- Responses to the question concerning attitudes toward the societal phenomenon of retirement in general were inconclusive and showed no significant relationship to gender or any of the other variables considered.

Discussion

Analysis of the results has focused on two primary questions: 1. Are there gender

differences in attitudes toward retirement, and 2. Do further differences between the genders appear when the relationship between retirement attitudes and each of the five other variables is examined?

Our data lend further support to Atchley's (1976) contention that women tend to have less positive attitudes toward retirement than men. However, the results yielded little conclusive information about the possible sources of that difference. Women's attitudes were not related to their job status either as faculty member or NTP, their age (except for those who had not thought about retirement), their marital status, their educational level, or their job satisfaction.

Although the data did not offer concrete evidence of the specific sources of women's more negative attitudes toward retirement, some possible explanations have been suggested. First, the fact that jobs are as meaningful to women as they are to men has gained increased recognition. Second, many women have returned to work after their children are grown. As a result, they have less time in the work force to complete personal career goals and, upon retirement, no longer have a demanding homemaker role to replace the lost work role. Finally, since women tend to live longer than men, they face potentially many more years of retired life than do their male counterparts. All of these may in some ways contribute to their ambivalence about retirement.

The U.S. Department of Labor reported in June 1978 that 50.4% of all American women over the age of 16 are now in the labor force, representing 41% of the total. An ongoing national longitudinal study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the group of women, age 25-30, that is now employed will remain almost solidly in the work force until retirement. They will constitute the first group of American women to do so since

Colonial times. It is apparent, therefore, that our society will have to deal with changes that will accompany this trend in terms of marital relationships and sex roles, work roles, child-rearing practices, and women's retirement experiences. These trends underline the need for further exploration in these areas.

FIGURE 1: VARIABLES RELATING TO ATTITUDES TOWARD RETIREMENT

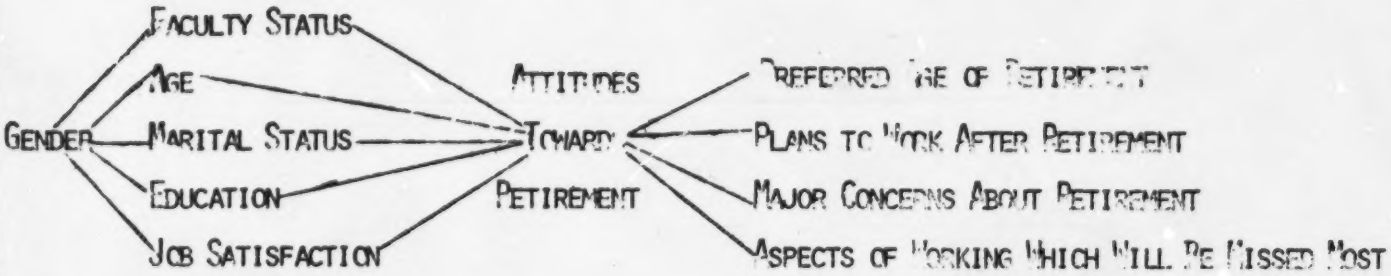

TABLE I: DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

	Men	Women	Total
Total	706	252	958
Percent Faculty	72%	66%	71%
Median Age	41.9	39.5	41.5
Marital Status[a]			
Never Married	8%	33%	15%
Married	86%	51%	77%
Separated, Widowed, Divorced	6%	16%	8%
Modal Education[b]	Ph.D. (55%)	M.A. or M.S. (54%)	Ph.D. (48%)
Modal Job Title (Faculty)[c]	Professor (35%)*	Asst. Professor (38%)	Assoc. Professor (32%)
Modal Level of Job Satisfaction	"Great Deal" (59%)	"Great Deal" (62%)	"Great Deal" (60%)

a. $X^2 = 135.2$, 4df, $p < .001$

b. $X^2 = 56.7$, 4df, $p < .001$

c. $X^2 = 47.8$, 3df, $p < .001$

* 33% were associate professors

TABLE II: RETIREMENT ATTITUDES BY GENDER AND FACULTY STATUS*
(Percent)

	Men[a]			Women[b]			Total		
Attitude	Faculty	NTP**	Total	Faculty	NTP	Total	Faculty	NTP	Total
With Pleasure	42	45	43	33	33	33	39	41	40
With Mixed Feelings	32	24	30	42	36	40	35	28	33
With Fear or Dread	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4
Have Not Thought About It	22	27	23	21	26	23	22	27	23
Total Numbers	(495)	(183)	(678)	(160)	(84)	(244)	(655)	(267)	(922)

* 35 Missing Cases

** Non-Teaching Professionals

a. $X^2 = 4.1$, 3df, n.s.

b. $X^2 = 1.5$, 3df, n.s.

TABLE III: RETIREMENT ATTITUDES BY GENDER AND AGE*
(Percent)

	Men[a]					Women[b]					Total				
Attitude	21-30	31-40	41-50	51 and older	Total	21-30	31-40	41-50	51 and older	Total	21-30	31-40	41-50	51 and older	Total
With Pleasure	29	38	47	52	43	23	29	46	40	34	26	36	47	49	41
With Mixed Feelings	17	27	29	40	30	27	36	40	51	39	22	29	31	43	32
With Fear or Dread	4	4	4	4	4	6	5	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	4
Have Not Thought About It	50	31	20	4	23	44	30	10	5	23	47	31	18	4	23
Total Numbers	(77)	(248)	(186)	(179)	(690)	(66)	(65)	(52)	(62)	(245)	(143)	(313)	(238)	(241)	(935)

* 23 Missing Cases

a. $X^2 = 82.3$, 9df, $p < .001$

b. $X^2 = 38.3$, 9df, $p < .001$

TABLE IV: RETIREMENT ATTITUDES BY GENDER AND MARITAL STATUS*
(Percent)

	Men[a]				Women[b]				Total			
Attitude	Never Married	Married	Separated, Widowed, Divorced	Total	Never Married	Married	Separated, Widowed, Divorced	Total	Never Married	Married	Separated, Widowed, Divorced	Total
With Pleasure	49	58	33	55	51	43	33	44	50	55	33	52
With Mixed Feelings	40	37	64	39	46	50	60	50	44	39	62	42
With Fear or Dread	11	5	3	6	3	7	6	6	6	6	5	6
Total Numbers	(37)	(463)	(33)	(533)	(61)	(96)	(33)	(190)	(98)	(559)	(66)	(723)

* Respondants having "given no thought to retirement" excluded; 19 missing cases

a. $X^2 = 11.5$, 4df, $p < .02$

b. $X^2 = 3.5$, 4df, n.s.

TABLE V: RETIREMENT ATTITUDES BY GENDER AND EDUCATION*
(Percent)

	Men[a]					Women[b]					Total				
Attitude	BA, BS	MA, MS	Ph.D.	Other	Total	BA, BS	MA, MS	Ph.D.	Other	Total	BA,BS	MA,MS	Ph.D.	Other	Total
With Pleasure	65	63	50	50	55	48	45	36	55	44	60	56	48	52	52
With Mixed Feelings	26	33	44	41	39	43	49	60	45	51	31	39	46	42	42
With Fear or Dread	9	4	6	9	6	9	6	4	0	5	9	5	5	6	6
Total Numbers	(46)	(159)	(286)	(22)	(513)	(21)	(105)	(52)	(9)	(187)	(67)	(264)	(338)	(31)	(700)

* Respondants having "given no thought to retirement" are excluded; 42 missing cases

a. $X^2 = 14.6$, 6df, n.s.

b. $X^2 = 6.4$, 6df, n.s.

TABLE VI: RETIREMENT ATTITUDES BY GENDER AND JOB SATISFACTION*
(Percent)

	Men[a]				Women[b]				Total			
Attitude	Great Deal of Satis-faction	Moderate Satis-faction	Little or no Satis-faction	Total	Great Deal of Satis-faction	Moderate Satis-faction	Little or no Satis-faction	Total	Great Deal of Satis-faction	Moderate Satis-faction	Little or no Satis-faction	Total
With Pleasure	54	57	61	55	41	53	31	44	50	57	54	52
With Mixed Feelings	40	37	34	39	52	45	61	51	44	38	41	42
With Fear or Dread	6	6	5	6	7	2	8	5	6	5	5	6
Total Numbers	(306)	(181)	(41)	(528)	(118)	(56)	(13)	(187)	(424)	(237)	(54)	(715)

* Respondants having given "no thought to retirement" are excluded; 27 missing cases

a. $X^2 = 2.9$, 4df, n.s.

b. $X^2 = 5.1$, 4df, n.s.

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